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S E C R E T ISLAMABAD 003645

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SUBJECT: TORKHAM TO KHYBER HIGHWAY OPENS TO CONVOYS TO AFGHANISTAN

REF: ISLAMABAD 3596

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson for reasons 1.4 (b) (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The main land route to Afghanistan through Pakistan, the Torkham to Khyber highway, was re-opened to truck convoys on November 17. It had been closed by local authorities for five days because of security concerns following a November 10 attack on a convoy in which 13 trucks, including two U.S. DOD contractor trucks, were hijacked and the cargo looted. Local authorities continue to limit the number of trucks in any convoy as well as the number of convoys permitted to travel to Afghanistan; post is pressing to increase these numbers. DOD contractors are considering using an alternative route through southern Pakistan. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) On November 17, local officials opened the Torkham to Khyber highway to U.S./ISAF convoy traffic but limited the number of trucks allowed in any one convoy because of security considerations. The Khyber Agency road was closed to convoys on November 12, following the November 10 hijacking of 13 trucks on November 10 (Reftel). Under the present system, 50 trucks per day moving in two separate convoys are permitted to cross into Afghanistan. DOD contractors were allotted a total of 25 trucks of dry cargo per day, with the other 25 going to NATO/ISAF (non U.S. contractors), UN World Food Program as well as NATO/ISAF and U.S. consigned fuel trucks. However, DOD contractors were able to take advantage of no-shows of other carriers to move 43 trucks on November 17, 33 trucks on November 18 and 43 trucks on November 19.

¶3. (C) According to the Office of Defense Representation in Pakistan (ODRP), the Pakistan military is currently developing plans to provide security (a Frontier Corps wing) to convoys along the Torkham to Khyber highway. ODRP believes there is a necessity to move 60 dry cargo trucks per day to meet growing demand. Consulate Peshawar has approached FATA Secretary for Law and Order, Ghulam Qadir, about the need to increase the size of the convoys. Additionally, DOD contractors are exploring other contingencies available, such as rerouting more critical cargo through the southern Chaman Border crossing and then moving cargo and fuel from Kandahar to Kabul.

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